

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A method for performing continuous extrusion of a metallic material, comprising feeding a metallic material into a groove located on a peripheral wall of a feed member, wherein the groove has an abutment arranged in said groove, protecting the groove against oxidation by a gas-protecting member for at least part of the peripheral wall of the feed member, wherein pressure in a space left between the gas-protecting member and the feed member is higher than the pressure in the surrounding atmosphere, and moving the metallic material along the groove into an extrusion member, wherein the gas-protecting member comprises at least one protecting member provided with at least one gas channel for feeding gas into the space left between the gas-protecting member and the feed member.

2. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the gas-protecting member is arranged at least in a part of the peripheral wall that does not contain material to be extruded.

3. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the gas-protecting member covers at least part of the surface of the peripheral wall of the feed member in the direction of the width thereof.

4. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the gas-protecting member covers at least the groove.

5. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, comprising feeding non-oxidizing gas through the gas-protecting member into the space left between the gas-protecting member and the feed member.

6. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 5, comprising feeding hydrogen into the space left between the gas-protecting member and the feed member.

7. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 5, comprising feeding hydrogen and nitrogen into the space left between the gas-protecting member and the feed member.

8. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 5, comprising preheating the non-oxidizing gas up to 400 – 800 degrees.

9. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 5, comprising removing oxygen from the non-oxidizing gas by filtration before feeding the gas into the space left between the gas-protecting member and the feed member.

10. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1, comprising protecting the extrusion method with an inert gas.

11. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 10, wherein the pressure in the space left between the gas-protecting member and the feed member is higher than the pressure in the inert gas.

12. (Currently amended) Equipment for performing continuous extrusion of a metallic material, comprising a groove located on a peripheral wall of a feed member; an abutment arranged in said groove; and for at least part of the peripheral wall of the feed member, a gas-protecting member, wherein pressure in a space left between the gas-protecting member and the feed member is higher than the pressure in the surrounding atmosphere, wherein the gas-

protecting member comprises at least one protecting member provided with at least one gas channel for feeding gas into the space left between the gas-protecting member and the feed member.

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Previously presented) The equipment according to claim 13, wherein the gas-protecting member comprises an inner protecting member and at least one outer protecting member.

15. (Previously presented) The equipment according to claim 14, wherein the gas fed through the inner protecting member has a higher pressure than the gas fed in through the outer protecting member.

16. (Previously presented) The equipment according to claim 12, comprising at least one lining element on both sides of the groove, on the peripheral wall of the feed member in order to seal a gap left between the gas-protecting member and the feed member.

17. (Previously presented) The equipment according to claim 16, wherein the lining element is made of the same material as the metallic material to be extruded.

18. (Previously presented) The equipment according to claim 12, wherein the metallic material is copper.

19. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the metallic material is copper.